FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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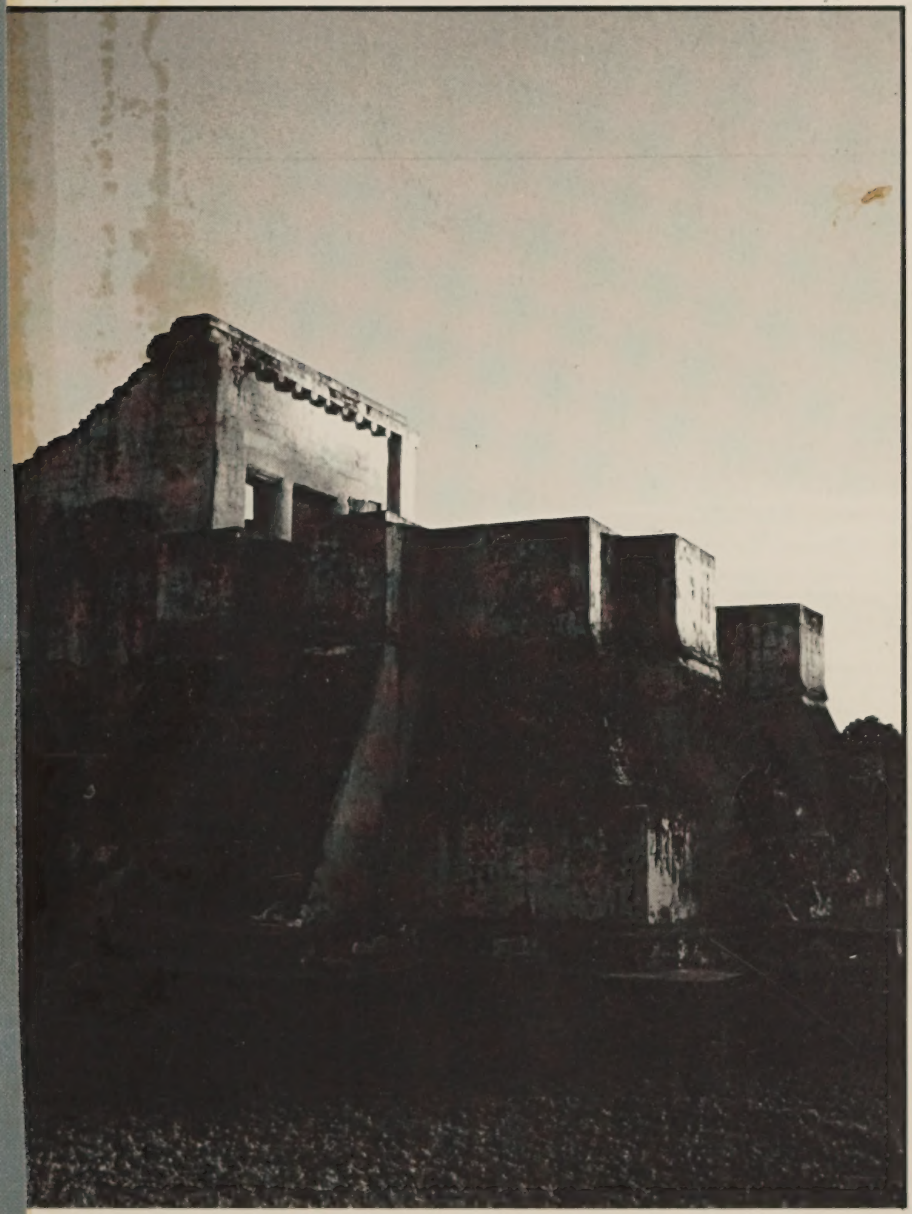

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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Cover by Tom Dunham: a Mayan Temple at Zaculeu, Guatemala

February. The holidays are just a memory. Grey skies, freezing rain and the flu seem to be our constant companions here in central New Jersey. Foul weather and foul moods flood our cellars and minds. To cheer myself up, I think of a favorite *haiku* poem:

"I would like to show people
Who are looking forward to cherry blossoms
The green grass hidden in the snow
Of early Spring."

But that thought doesn't really do it for me. It's 7:00 a.m. Sleet rattles against the window. A cough rattles in my chest. At 9:00 I'm due at the dentist. How do I welcome *this* day with joy and gratitude for whatever it brings? "Thy will, O Lord, not mine?"

Then the answer comes. I don't. I need to welcome and experience each *moment* as it arises, non-judgmentally and with complete openness to its infinite richness and potential. And I need to do that without assumptions or expectations, moment by moment, in an ongoing and timeless present.

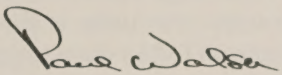
"Waking up, I smile with joy.
Dwelling in the present,
This is the only moment.
I vow to live it fully
And to look at everybody
With eyes of compassion."

Actually, of course, the present moment is the only moment I *can* experience. All else is memory or speculation. Happiness, a peaceful mind, and the joy of communion—with God, Self, a friend, or nature—can only be experienced in the moment. And only if I allow every thing and every moment to be exactly what it is, in all its uniqueness, rather than wishing it, or I, were somehow different or "better."

That's sometimes hard to do in February (or any other month, for that matter) but it's the secret of happiness; of a creative and constructive life. The "happiness" of power, money or worldly success evaporates almost

as fast as it's achieved. But the happiness of living every moment—in all its richness and potential—as a reflection, a manifestation of the Divine Reality, is a joy for all seasons.

The phone rings. It's the dentist's office. He's out sick today—with the flu. Another assumption-expectation down the drain. What joy! I feel better already. This day—like every day in the Divine Mind, *and* in mine—is going to be perfect—moment-by-moment!



Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer, Inc.

Today a letter arrived from a fifty-seven-year-old reader who has just lost his job. He asks, "how do we replenish ourselves and restore meaning to our lives when something we needed and wanted and loved is gone?" By coincidence the issue of *F.i.P.* now going to press attempts to answer that difficult question.

Psychologists and physicians are in basic agreement about the natural processes that occur in the months following a loss. Some years ago, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross mapped out six stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, guilt, depression, and acceptance. Today these are often reduced to three: an attempt to escape, despair, and acceptance.

In the first phase, as we recoil from the impact, a desire to deny or reject the painful event gives rise to a sense of numbness. Then as the hard reality forces itself on us, we sink into a state of despair. "She isn't coming back." "He is gone." "It's over." Some people never come out of this second stage and transform their sorrow into resentment and bitterness. Others walk all the way to the far side of sadness and retrieve their happiness. In this last phase they accept the inescapable and put life's tragedies behind. The last line of a poem by Emily Dickinson reveals her own familiarity with the three-fold process of loss: "First—Chill—then Stupor—then the letting go—."

These three stages explain the *psychological* dynamics of loss. In order to lift the experience onto a *spiritual* plane, I speak of five stages instead of three. After denial and despair I add *surrender*, and after that, *creativity*.

Surrender means giving up and giving in. Not in the depressing sense of a cruel defeat, but in the sense of bowing to God's will and graciously letting go of what we are powerless to retain. When life takes away a needed person, a cherished possession, the work we loved, the spiritually minded have no alternative but to give back to God what they wanted to keep and cling to. Whereas acceptance implies a fatalistic recognition of our helplessness and hopelessness to have and be and do what we want, surrender places a loss in the context of Divine providence and grace, where the cold feeling of frustration turns into the warmth of faith.

Creativity refers to newness. Loss calls for a new lease on life, and people who fully recover from loss use their imaginations—under the guid-

ance of the Creative Spirit—to become adventurers, explorers, pioneers. Like Thor Heyerdall who dared to cross the Atlantic on a small raft, they dive into the ocean of their own souls to look for their buried potentials, their undiscovered talents and interests. I think of a young man who plunged into writing when a shattered knee suddenly ended a promising athletic career. Like countless others who learn to paint or play golf or sew or garden or watch birds, he used his loss to mobilize a new talent, to take up a new activity where he could regain a sense of mastery. It does not matter if he became a good writer or a mediocre one. His creative response to loss is what counts, not the size of his gifts. He made a devastating experience meaningful by developing a previously hidden skill and in the process cut himself free from his suffering and reacquired the joy of living.

The articles in this edition of *Fellowship in Prayer* celebrate the lifestyles and attitudes of men and women who have come to terms with loss by acquiring a spiritual outlook and, as a consequence, have sometimes found themselves freer and more fulfilled.

Mary Ford-Grabowsky
Editor

The poor man said, "You wished me good day. I have never had a bad day. For if I am hungry I praise God; if it freezes, hails, snows, rains, if the weather is fair or foul, still I praise God; am I wretched and despised, I praise God, and so I have never had an evil day. You wished that God would send me luck. But I never had ill luck, for I know how to live with God, and I know that what God does is best; and what God gives me or ordains for me, be it good or ill, I take it cheerfully from God as the best that can be, and so I have never had ill luck. You wished that God would make me happy. I was never unhappy; for my only desire is to live in God's will, and I have so entirely yielded my will to God's, that what God wills, I will."

Meister Eckhart

The creative person, in the inspirational phase of the creative furor, loses the past and the future and lives only in the moment. One is all there, totally immersed, fascinated and absorbed in the present, in the current situation, in the here-now, with the matter-in-hand.

Abraham Maslow

There is found in the ashes of the soul reduced to nothing a seed of immortality.

Madame Guyon

The task of a developmental transition is to terminate a time in one's life; to accept the losses the termination entails, to review and evaluate the past; to decide which aspects of the past to keep and which to reject; and to consider one's wishes and possibilities for the future. One is suspended between past and future, and struggling to overcome the gap that separates them. Much from the past must be given up—separated from, cut out of one's life, rejected in anger, renounced in sadness or grief. And there is much that can be used as a basis for the future. Changes must be attempted in both self and world.

Daniel Levinson

The creative act is one way of overcoming the state of helplessness. It is a coping mechanism; a way of exercising control, as well as a way of expressing emotion. The act of expressing emotion gives the sufferer some sense of mastery, even if he or she is not particularly gifted.

Anthony Storr

Life Changed, Not Ended

JASPER GREEN PENNINGTON

Parents die, institutions close, a young friend commits suicide. Life grants to no one immunity from loss. But this pre-Lenten meditation by an Episcopal priest shows that God is always present with a promise of comfort and hope.

"The death of a priest-friend, the closing of a beloved institution, out of a job, a new parish, separation from former friends and parishioners, the suicide of a young acolyte, stress and burnout, the wrenching apart of a pastoral relationship, a new parish, my mother's death, children leaving home, fatigues and frustrations! Life ended, Lord, in so many ways, life grieved over, life turned from light to darkness, from sun to gloom, from hope to despair. The Biblical journey personalized, lamentations made my own. The spirit growing as dry as the dust, confusion as in a wilderness, the vision clouded. Lord, incline your ear to my lamentation for my life is at the brink of the grave. I have become like one who has no strength, lost among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more. My sight has failed me because of trouble. Will your wonders be known in the dark?"

These words written as a response to daily Bible reading are a reminder that for scripture to be Scripture, it must speak across the ages. It must tell us something about the pilgrims and pilgrimages of old, but also something about our own pilgrimage. The separations, the loss of family and friends and familiar places, the anguish of death and the reality of living on without that loved one, the tears of being misunderstood and rejected, the anger over injustices, the despairs over ideals dashed, the wanderings in wildernesses seemingly unlit by that Light which once seemed so clear and bright. Stories only of Moses and the Children of Israel, of Abraham, of poor Saul. Acted as curate for five years. Then the ninety-year old institution I worked and taught at was closed abruptly. My work there was heavy personal investment and far from finished. Finding new jobs for staff, I accepted a call from those "who had much

Jasper Pennington, Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Ypsilanti, MI, is active in ecumenical relationships. He is particularly interested in the new forms of prayer and spirituality taking shape today as eastern and western traditions influence each other. Dr. Pennington holds degrees in music, history, library science and theology.

love to give" with the lack of sophistication which is often the mark of clergy. The immediate rejection by a vestryman, the suicide of a young acolyte and a further eighteen funerals in a space of eighteen months compounded by the ceaseless crises of a troubled parish left me physically and spiritually exhausted. Life was surely ended . . . and my "enemies" were gleefully unconcerned.

Temporary salvation came in a Benedictine habit and the death throes were arrested as I rested physically and "in God." A second major move in two years, an old parish recovering from the sudden death of its rector of twenty-five years, much to be done on every level, some much needed praise. Life perhaps not ended but still shaky, still uncertain, still struggling with the demoralization of Lent. Blessed time with my dear mother, then her death, peaceful and with her family. The settling in of the reality of her loss, that I am now an orphan . . . at 49! The sharings, the unspoken understandings no longer possible. Life changed and surely ended!

Yet I have just celebrated "Refreshment Sunday," the Fourth Sunday of Lent and my life has not ended. God has not left me comfortless, has not left me to die in Lenten wildernesses. He gives me Bread along with the five thousand, he speaks to me through my companions in the way, he touches me in letters from out of the past, he offers me the drink of returning rains. This is the human story, my story, the story of souls turned God-wards with all the sorrows and joys and hopes and fears of our fragile hearts and minds and spirits.

For Scripture does speak across the ages. It speaks to the scholar as well as to the unsophisticated souls seeking guidance and comfort and words of love. It spoke to my dear grandmother and to my mother of blessed memory and it speaks to me as I wrestle with my call as a Christian and as a priest. Scripture becomes sharper, clearer when we seek its message in times of crises. It deepens our soul's delight when we turn to it daily for expressions of daily living, for living open to the winds of life inhabited by God. For life is constantly changing, changing for joy and also for sorrow as we walk the pilgrim's way. My own life plagued by insecurities and fears, trembling from crosses which I only partially sense, overwhelmed by the tragedies and inhumanities I see around me, despairing over my own inabilities and too often wondering whether this call I acted upon was only a fleeting romance rather than an enlistment. Am I lost in the wilderness of expectations from others, or in the

wilderness of poor choices? Have I answered a call to life which is false, to a God who is only a god? Is darkness to be my only companion?

Lent has gone on for a long time in my life. The loss by death of friends and family have always been grievous to me, since my first loss experienced as a child. Even as an agent of change, I cling to the past as much as any. This long Lent began with the death of my rector-friend-counsellor for whom I had the fragrance of spring. FOR YOUR FAITHFUL PEOPLE, LORD, LIFE IS CHANGED, NOT ENDED. ALLELUIA!

The Lessons of Grief: A Personal Account

CELESTE O. COX

When my father died a week before Thanksgiving two years ago, it was a shock to the family.

We'd all expected that particular Thanksgiving to be a memorable one. It would have been my first time to host the family for the traditional holiday meal and, at age 37 and in my twelfth year of marriage, my first attempt at preparing a turkey. All of us, especially me, were looking forward to the good-natured razzing that would be tossed about on that subject. And Dad, the consummate bedeviller, would have been leading it all on. I suppose the old expression—"Dimple on chin, devil within"—is true. My father certainly had the dimple *and* the wit!

As things turned out, that Thanksgiving did prove to be memorable but in a drastically different way than we had anticipated. It was the start of a transformation for all of us, our first lesson in living with grief.

We miss so much the sound of my father's voice. When he was in good spirits, his voice was a veritable celebration of life. People loved to be around him because he was entertaining; he was funny; he was radically opinionated, sometimes to the point of hysterical absurdity. Most of all, though, he loved the dynamics of human conversation; that's when he was most alive.

Few people knew it, but he had his darker side, a crippling, recurring depression which he battled much of his life. He didn't have much contact with friends when he got that way. The depressions grew worse and more frequent as his physical problems worsened in later years. But to the end, he was capable of resurrecting that unique "joie de vivre" that was his special gift to the world. Lately, I've been aching to hear that special joy in his voice "just one more time," as we grievers so often say.

If I were to visit with him today, I would tell him about the changes in my life that have come about as a result of losing him. I would have the courage to look him in the eye and say, among other things: *You were important to me. Sometimes I hurt you; sometimes you hurt me. But I know*

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you loved me. And I loved you, too. I hated losing you and with all my heart I want you back with us. In other words, I would say the kinds of things I rarely said when I had the opportunity to speak.

After the first month or two after my father's death, I stopped the outbursts, stopped crying, "I just can't believe he's gone!" I began to accept the reality of his death. He was not coming back; I knew it; I accepted it. But what was the meaning of this loss?

No other experience, even serious problems in my professional and personal life, had affected me in the all-consuming way of grief. Grief wreaked havoc on my body, tormented my mind, and choked my spirit. I realized one day that there was only one way to resolve this loss, and that was to contemplate its meaning. For me, that meant re-examining my faith in the Christian beliefs I claimed as my own.

I chose to work at deepening my commitment to the spiritual pilgrimage, a journey toward which I'd long felt drawn but which I'd pursued more intellectually, and less experientially. Until then, I'd managed to avoid rigorous self-examination and dedication to truth. It seemed the time was right for self-confrontation and a relationship with God.

And where have I journeyed? In one sense, I have returned, full circle, to my initial reaction: "I can't believe he's gone!"

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Though I remain irrevocably saddened by our loss, today I am able to face whatever lies ahead with hope. Now, when I say, "I can't believe he's gone," I mean that I have looked around me, experienced existence in a new way, and thus informed, have decided to live out my life in faith and hope. Therefore, it is impossible for me to believe my father *is* no more: "I cannot believe he is gone."

This response of faith came gradually, in good time. There was no blinding vision, no flash of profound insight. The heartache of grief simply wearied me; that, in turn, slowed me down, but in a mysterious way also gave me the ability to concentrate more fully, to take one step at a

time. I continued to work. I prayed the daily office, the intercessory prayers, the prayer of the heart. I listened and waited for God. My life was an Advent.

And God came. Not in the ways one might hope for, at least at the outset of the journey. Not in some fantastical vision, or some miraculous manifestation. Instead, God came quietly, gradually, changing the way I perceived the world. For the first time in my life, I really looked at the creation around me and saw that all things were indeed "wonderfully made." Great joy came in the most ordinary encounters: watching ducks glide across a pond or walking the dog with my niece.

With this new way of seeing, I also noticed the compassion and goodness of the people around me. How could it be that I had not seen these things before? Most remarkably, I found myself wanting to be a purposeful agent of compassion and love. I don't know precisely how that happened, either, but it did. Two years ago, I would not have known the joy of visiting the sick and the dying. Now I do.

I know my father still *is*. I know it not through some objective proof of his existence or some foolhardy wish to have things go my way; rather, I have come to know it in my heart and in my bones, as a bird knows it will fly when it takes that faithful leap into the air, skyward. I know it because I have taken the time to read what God has written on my heart, what he writes on every heart, from the beginning. His truth—"I am the resurrection and the life"—is always with us; it is, in fact, our very will to live, our hope, our aspirations. It is the source of our love and the reason most of us cry out in grief, "I cannot believe my mother/father/brother/sister is gone!" *In pain, we speak truthfully*, from the heart, though we may not be fully aware of the meaning of what we are saying, of the deeper Truth within: the God that is with us always and everywhere, so close that He is part of us, in us.

When we are moving too hurriedly through life, focused on ourselves and not on God and others, we lose the ability to see what is in front of us, what is available if we would only take the time to look. "Seek and ye shall find." And what does that mean? To discover that the ordinary *is* the extraordinary. That every thought and action has the potential to be holy, to be a means of consecrating time, the context in which we live out the joys and sorrows of this life. At the breakfast tables, the Christmas dinners, the phone calls to mother/father/sister/brother/friend. Here is where God is, in the real, the palpable interchange of human beings caring for one another.

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Perhaps grievers are especially receptive to such discoveries. Of course, as do all of us, grievers have options. One is to deny the pain of loss, to cover it up in the busy-ness of life, and to "try to forget." Another is to accept the pain of living. And wait. Sojourn a while in the desert of grief. Watch the gradual assimilation of the bitter and the sweet. Give thanks that through the melding together of the disparate emerges greater unity and new life. Not life without pain! Loss is real and it stays with us always. Did Christ not bear the wounds of crucifixion even after His glorious resurrection?

Yes, I still grieve, and here is the cross that I bear: I want to hear my father's voice again. I want to watch him concoct his special (and incredibly potent) Christmas eggnog. I want to hear what he would have to say about the present conundrum of American politics. I want to see him springing up the steps of my sister's front porch with that look of expectancy on his face. How he relished the exciting possibilities of fellowship and conversation! The fact is, it's been too long since I've spoken with him, laughed with him, argued with him, been frustrated to tears by him.

At the same time, I am grateful that we are in the process of becoming new people, that he and I—all of us—are evolving toward our human destiny, toward the Source of Life itself. Of course, my life remains within the constructs of time and space. But precisely because I have loved and lost my father and know intimately this painful aspect of the temporal life, I am beginning to know something of the infinite and the Changeless as well. I am beginning to learn what is written on my heart: that the essential, the only, meaning is Love. And it is with us in the ordinary, the here-and-now. It is with us in the unfathomable always.

Forgive Me, Lord

Forgive me, Lord, if for today
I am like the water, turbulent.
Angry, churned.
Not reflecting Thee.

Forgive me, Lord, if for today
I could not find Thee soon enough
To stay the storm's swift cloudy warning.

Forgive me, Lord, tomorrow I shall be
Clear and smooth again
Reflecting every wish of Thine.
Like a green mountain lake
In the morning.

Amen

by Nixeon Civille Handy

Khatum

O Thou, who art the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty.
The Lord of Heaven and earth, open our hearts, that we may hear Thy Voice, which constantly cometh from within.
Disclose to us Thy Divine Light, which is hidden in our souls, that we may know and understand life better.
Most Merciful and Compassionate God, give us Thy great Goodness.
Teach us Thy loving forgiveness.
Raise us above the distinctions and differences which divide us.
Send us the Peace of Thy Divine Spirit.
And unite us all in Thy Perfect Being.

Amen.

by Hazrat Inayt Khan

Please send your favorite prayer typed, double spaced to the Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08542.

Paul M. Schrock

The Essence of Spiritual Living

ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

One of Judaism's greatest writers presents the one perfect method for coping with loss: "Envy and fear, despair and resentment, anguish and grief, which lie heavily upon the heart, are dispelled like shadows" by the light of prayer.

Prayer is our attachment to the utmost. Without God in sight, we are like the scattered rungs of a broken ladder. To pray is to become a ladder on which thoughts mount to God to join the movement toward Him which surges unnoticed throughout the entire universe. We do not step out of the world when we pray; we merely see the world in a different setting. The self is not the hub, but the spoke of the revolving wheel. In prayer we shift the center toward which all forces tend. He is the source, and we are the flowing of His force, the ebb and flow of His tides.

Prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest, and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy. For when we betake ourselves to the extreme opposite of the ego, we can behold a situation from the aspect of God. Prayer is a way to master what is inferior in us, to discern between the signal and the trivial, between the vital and the futile, by taking counsel with what we know about the will of God, by seeing our fate in proportion to God. Prayer clarifies our hope and intentions. It helps us discover our true aspirations, the pangs we ignore, the longings we forget. It is an act of self-purification, a quarantine for the soul. It gives us the opportunity to be honest, to say what we believe, and to stand for what we say. For the accord of assertion and conviction, of thought and conscience, is the basis of all prayer.

Prayer teaches us what to aspire to. So often we do not know what to cling to. Prayer implants in us the ideals we ought to cherish. Redemption, purity of mind and tongue, or willingness to help, may hover as ideas before our mind, but the idea becomes a concern, something to long for, a goal to be reached, when we pray: "Guard my tongue from

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evil and my lips from speaking guile; and in the face of those who curse me, let my soul be silent."

Prayer is the essence of spiritual living. Its spell is present in every spiritual experience. Its drive enables us to delve into what is beneath our beliefs and desires, and to emerge with a renewed taste for the infinite simplicity of the good. On the globe of the microcosm the flow of prayer is like the Gulf Stream, imparting warmth to all that is cold, melting all that is hard in our life. For even loyalties may freeze to indifference if detached from the stream which carries the strength to be loyal. How often does justice lapse into cruelty, and righteousness into hypocrisy. Prayer revives and keeps alive the rare greatness of some past experience in which things glowed with meaning and blessing. It remains important, even when we ignore it for a while, like a candlestick set aside for the day. Night will come, and we shall again gather round its tiny flame. Our affection for the trifles of living will be mixed with longing for the comfort of all men.

However, prayer is no panacea, no substitute for action. It is, rather, like a beam thrown from a flashlight before us into the darkness. It is in this light that we who grope, stumble, and climb, discover where we stand, what surrounds us, and the course which we should choose. Prayer makes visible the right, and reveals what is hampering and false. In its radiance, we behold the worth of our efforts, the range of our hopes, and the meaning of our deeds. Envy and fear, despair and resentment, anguish and grief, which lie heavily upon the heart, are dispelled like shadows by its light.

Sometimes prayer is more than a light before us; it is a light within us. Those who have once been resplendent with this light find little meaning in speculations about the efficacy of prayer. A story is told about a Rabbi who once entered heaven in a dream. He was permitted to approach the temple of Paradise where the great sages of the Talmud, the Tannaim, were spending their eternal lives. He saw that they were just sitting around the table studying the Talmud. The disappointed Rabbi wondered, "Is this all there is to Paradise?" But suddenly he heard a voice, "You are mistaken. The Tannaim are not in Paradise. Paradise is in the Tannaim."

Thoughts on Turning Forty

ALICE MANSFIELD

I will call to mind your deeds;
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will meditate on all your works,
and ponder your mighty deeds.
(*Ps. 77.6*)

Thirty-nine, soon to be forty . . . and what do I have to show for all these years of my life? What have I achieved thus far in these days gone by? Does everyone have such sobering thoughts as the Big Four-O approaches? Maybe, maybe not. I do. And, compulsive note-taker that I am, I not only reflect, I make a list. I am amazed and gratified with what emerges. I had thought this list might include such accomplishments as climbing all the way up the rope ladder to the dome of St. Peter's in Rome or typing furiously the script a Broadway playwright communicated to me word-by-word right out of his head as we sat at my word processor all hours of the day and night. Instead, my notes reveal the adventures of a grateful heart singing its hymn of praise to a mighty, munificent God.

I have loved and been loved.

I have developed and enjoyed many true and lasting friendships.

I have communed with nature and reveled in her bounty.

I have heard the eternal music of the universe, the splendid symphony of creation renewing itself, and I have gladly joined the cosmic dance.

I have discovered the riches of prayer and rejoiced in the heritage of my faith.

I have celebrated the freedom of death and yearned for my own final homecoming.

I have been comforted by memories and healed in remembering.

I have treasured the peace of surrender.

I have learned the wisdom of silence and the secrets of solitude.

I have sought and found our God in the sacrament of the present moment.

Alice Mansfield, a writer in Washington, DC, sees herself as "a celebrant of life who exults in the marvels of creation and delights in the gift of the present moment."

Tom Dunham

I have cherished the mystery of my womanhood and gloried in my God-given call to be life-giver, nurturer and healer.

I have acquired the astonishing power of positive thinking.

I have delighted in the uniqueness of each individual person and praised our God for our lifelong capacity to learn and grow.

I have looked into my deepest self and found that I am not as perfect as I would like to be nor as bad as I thought I was.

I have given thanks daily for the wonder of my being and exulted in the goodness and love of our Creator.

My life has been—and will continue to be, please God—rich and full. Yes, it is true that sometimes during these years I have been treated shabbily in various and sundry ways by people who, acting out of their own unresolved issues, didn't know better. (God forgive me for having done the same, especially when I did know better!) More often than not, I have been accorded respect and kindness by persons whose lives of love, devotion and sacrifice have enriched and sustained my own.

I have also been well acquainted with sadness, loneliness, anger, grief, pain in mind and body, and similar hard blessings, all of which have led me into that marvelous solidarity which is ours as fellow pilgrims on this planet earth. In addition, I have suffered from weariness, anxiety, ill temper, bad moods, fear, despair and failure—and survived them all victoriously. I have accepted, with gratitude and joy, that I am a member of the human race—magnificently created, gloriously redeemed, richly blessed and dearly loved.

Looking back on my list, I realize that these are not, after all, accomplishments or achievements. They are gifts. Gifts freely bestowed by our gracious and merciful God, who is lavish in loving and generous in giving, always pouring out upon us a father/mother's enduring, abiding love—"full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over."

Recalling the words of the prophet, I know my life is indeed sheer giftedness, now and forever:

> The favors of the Lord are not exhausted,
> his mercies are not spent;
> They are renewed each morning,
> so great is his faithfulness.
> My portion is the Lord, says my soul;
> therefore I will hope in him.
> (*Lamentations 3. 22-24*)

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Why do men and women in 59 countries read *Fellowship in Prayer*? Our readers tell us:

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If you, too, find *Fellowship in Prayer* "a joy and inspiration" to read, won't you take a moment to read and fill in the other side of this page?

Paul Walsh
President
Fellowship in Prayer

JUNE MOREAU

I am Waiting Tenderly

weaving the time
into baskets sweet of grass
but one cannot capture happiness
for it has a thousand dancing feet.

Yet, am I waiting tenderly
spinning the time
so slender in its pass
into golden thread
to mend my heart.

What is the Answer . . .

Take three pebbles of shining quartz
and the evening song of a flute
Multiply them by the flight of a plover.

With Gifts

Who goes there but the morning
A child with a flower in her hand.

Who goes there but the noon
The unwrapping of the sun's whole gift.

Who goes there but the evening
A skyless bird nestling deep
In the grasses softness.

Who goes there but the night
That makes me fix the stars
With eternal eyes.

June Moreau, a Massachusetts poet, has published in Yankee, Phantasm, The Christian Science Monitor, *and the October, '88 edition of* FiP.

The Winged Lion

The winged lion appears
from the clouds of morning
to lie down beside me
lobelia, lilies, blessed thistle
and the sweet grasses of the sun.

The winged lion appears
from the clouds of noon
to lie down beside me
haze of golden yellow bees
and the sky in its infancy.

The winged lion appears
from the clouds of night
to lie down beside me
my heartbeats are pearls
strung on the softest thread.

Solitude

This morning
the blue spruce tree
came into my room
branches brushing
against the windows
of my sleep.
When I awakened
the spruce was gone
and I found
a few shards of sky
on the floor.

In the Sky of Your Heart

You can keep anything
in the sky of your heart.
April morning steeped in green hills,
sun-tinged orioles
clouds reflecting the glow of jonquils,
rain-blue songs of a flute,
great meadows, a forest of oak
and always the flock of sparrows.

Yes, you can keep anything
In the everywhere sky of your heart.

This Land

The land here is better known to me than all the wilderness in the palms of my hands, and if I should see my own face more often, I would not know it as well as the paths through these fields and trees.

In this isle I fill the vessel of my being with bouquets of sunshine, wind and birdsong, and sometimes I gather delicate offspring from the day moon that sails over deep green, ever wakeful pines.

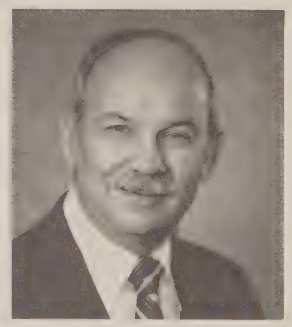
When the white-throated sparrow sings his best the moon comes down to earth to take on a few sprightly passengers, crickets, robins, wrens and the grand old turtle that lives near Gold Pond.

APOLOGIES to June Moreau for an error in "In July." The correct verse is: I love the song of the vireo.

Finding God in a New Land

JOHN J. PILCH

Coping with a traumatic relocation felt like the Babylonian Captivity, but faith and prayer enabled this author to endure his time of loss.



The news came as a shock. Restructuring the central offices of a Catholic Archdiocese couldn't possibly reduce a two-person office to one person and still hope to serve more than 600,000 Catholic adults and their school-aged children. But it did.

At age 51, after more than twenty-five years experience and countless years of substandard wages tolerated only by dedication to a mission, Jean's position was cut. And no hope was given for another position in the new structure. Her colleague would have to meet the needs alone.

How would we manage on my self-employment fees which have never amounted to even half her pitiful salary but which joined to it was enough for a husband and wife to live on as cheaply as one person? Who other than a department store hires educator-types at Christmas time? How could God allow this to happen to two people who struggle to serve faithfully in the ministry?

Within a month, a new position opened for Jean half-way across the country. It offered an excellent career move and a huge improvement in salary. While I criss-crossed the US during the busy period in my ministry (Lent), she was resettling in the East. We didn't know then that the involuntary separation would last four long months.

Experience in the professional theater trained me well to hide my real sentiments and play my expected role authentically. As a motivational speaker, I had to inspire audiences with my reshaped biblical stories, songs, anecdotes, and jokes even though I was experiencing personal dif-

John Pilch is a biblical scholar well known for his lectures, filmstrips, audio-cassettes and publications. He resides in Catonsville, MD, with his wife, Jean Peters Pilch.

ficulty living my own message. I felt too crushed to be able to stand up straight.

When my busy season ended, I resumed my regular schedule at home. And surprise of surprises, during my daily morning walks I found bible passages and old prayers popping unexpectedly into my head. "Pray that this does not happen in winter" Jesus warned about the destruction of the Temple. Our crushing experience of job loss happened in the dead of a Wisconsin winter! Why did I not pray to prepare myself for such an eventuality?

Then a line in an old Polish lament from my youth recurred: "From strong winds, raging waters, blazing heat, and war, deliver us O Lord!" This symbolism certainly well described how I felt every morning after a fitful night's sleep. Singing the ancient melody mentally brought comfort. My ethnic religious heritage has always been a comfort and support.

But the refrain that finally settled in my mind and repeated itself over and over was: "O God come to my assistance; O Lord make haste to help me." I could hear two sides of a choir chanting these verses and setting the tempo for my walk. The mantra quality of the chanted phrases brought relaxation and peace each morning. I was actually able to get on with my day, return to my desk to study or write, and sometimes break for a prayer of thanksgiving that things were going so well under the circumstances.

After two months, I was able to sell our midwest home and purchase one in the East. In the next two months, closing dates were set, mortgages were approved, moving plans were made, and finally after a four month separation my wife and I were reunited once more.

During those final weeks as our future began to look increasingly hopeful, the conclusion of Psalm 126 sprang into my mind as my mood changed: "Although they went forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown, they came back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves." I even saw in my mind's eye a still photograph illustrating this verse in a psalter on my shelves. A woman with her hair flowing in the wind has her head cocked back, her mouth open in loud laughter: "Ah, ha, ha, ha!" Her face is covered with a smile that has almost totally eradicated the pain, the tears, and the facial skin creases caused by deep grief.

The Babylonian Exile was over for the woman and all God's people. The temporary exile/separation was over for me and my wife, too. God was bringing us together again in a new promised land.

One pleasant discovery in this draining experience was that a lifetime of prayer experiences, memorized prayers in many languages, formal study of theology and bible, ethnic religious devotions and traditions, and much more all came bubbling forth spontaneously from deep within to meet my human need. The habit of prayer is a good habit to develop.

The Likes of Me

LORAINE MARIE PETER

Even those unfamiliar with the devotional practices described here will appreciate the faith-giving value of a coincidence when it is viewed from a spiritual perspective. This author attributes 28 years of happiness to a coincidence that reason cannot understand, but the heart cherishes.

We welcome your account of your own "Transforming Experience" (a spiritual experience that had an outcome for the good of an individual, group, or institution). Please send it (typed and double spaced) to The Editor, Fellowship In Prayer, 291 Witherspoon Street, Princeton NJ 08542. Include a brief biography.

Someone, probably my mother, told me when I was very small that a lady says "thank you" when another does something nice for her. Maybe that's why I've tried over the years to spend as much time saying thanks to God as I spend in asking Him for something. It isn't that my prayers are always answered. Sometimes despite a lot of praying, it still rains on my parade. Rain or shine though, I express thanks for any consideration given my request.

It was March 1, 1960. I was a Sister of Mercy stationed in the west side of Cleveland. It was time to begin two novenas, one in petition, one in thanksgiving, in preparation for St. Joseph's feast, March 19. My unusual problem was I had no favor to ask of my favorite saint. True, I had a homeroom of 60+ eighth grade boys, and that was reason enough to pray, but I figured by March the class was as controlled as it was going to be. No one else had requested prayers either.

I knelt before St. Joseph's altar and told him that even though I didn't have a feast day wish I would begin the prayers, and would let him know my request when I decided. He agreed. Days later I prayed, "St. Joseph, my decision is made. On your feast day I'd like the assurance that one person is safely home with God. It can be anyone, even myself, but don't feel obligated to choose me, I'm only 29!" I finished the nine days of

Loraine Marie Peter is a Sister of Mercy of the Province of Cincinnati. Her ministries have included teaching, elementary school administration and medical social work. She is presently the Province Director of Communications for her community.

petition and immediately began the novena of thanksgiving; I was happy knowing someone would be HOME by the 19th.

On March 15, about 8 p.m., I was called to the superior/principal's office. While walking the long few feet to the office I wondered if I had been too strict with Patrick that day. Patrick was the classroom clown and he had been worse than his usual terrible self all day. The look on Sister Marie Ann's face, and the presence of her first counselor, told me it was something more than Patrick.

Sister Marie Ann had the phone in her hand, and gave it to me without saying a word. My sister Jean was on the line. "Rainey," Jean said, "mom's gone!" "Where did she go?" I asked, for our mother liked to travel. There was a momentary silence. Regaining some composure Jean continued, "Rainey, mom died this afternoon." Silence. "I called her this morning at 10:00 just like I did every morning. We spoke for over an hour, and laughed a lot about little things the baby is doing. Although she hasn't felt well lately, she didn't complain about anything. Louie stopped to see her this afternoon and found her resting on her bed. She was dead!"

I was nobody's daughter. I no longer had a home. I no longer had a mother to worry about and to worry about me. I cried long into the night. How did this happen? I didn't tell mother I love her. I didn't say goodbye.

Not once during that long sad night did I think of St. Joseph or my prayer. Early the next morning I went with swollen eyes into the chapel; amid the pain I knew that somehow I had to offer my mother freely to God. I looked up at the tabernacle and then at St. Joseph. It was then I remembered! My mind and heart almost exploded! Thoughts of joy and sadness, happiness and regrets dashed through me with lightning speed. Did I have something to do with my mother's death? If mother were truly with God there was reason for great rejoicing, but what if I had prayed differently? Questions, I had many questions, but no answers. Raw exposed emotions were strewn over pulsating wonder.

The doorbell rang, the pastor had come to offer condolences. "Father," I said excitedly, "I have something to tell you!" I told him about my prayer as we stood outside the chapel. The priest looked at me through glasses perched far down on his nose. "Sister," he said emphatically, "God does not work miracles for the likes of you and me! You prayed. Your mother died. There is no connection between the two; it is

merely a coincidence. You are never to mention this to anyone again!" The response truly surprised me, it had never occurred to me that miracles weren't given to anyone who asked in absolute faith. Dropping my head in appropriate repentance, I said, "Yes, Father." I felt totally deflated—for a minute. Father's black cassock had hardly cleared the door, when I went through the convent telling the other eight or nine Sisters my "secret." They were interested and understanding.

Sister Marie Ann and I caught an early train for Cincinnati that same day. Mother's funeral was scheduled for March 18, but was later rescheduled when my brother's flight from Florida was delayed. The funeral was held on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph.

I moved through the rituals of the wake, Mass, burial, home visit in a quasi-manner of being totally present and totally distant. The night of the funeral, when I arrived back at the convent where we were staying, I went immediately into the large dark chapel. The glow from a few candles played on the floor and walls lighting the way to St. Joseph's altar. Flowers from the funeral, placed there at the request of the family, decorated the altar.

I knelt to speak to St. Joseph while copious tears streamed down my cheeks and onto my starched white guimpe. I told Joseph that it would soon be Easter, but I would not be singing Alleluias this year. I don't know how long I knelt on that hard marble step looking up into the face of my friend. I was searching for understanding and meaning, but they didn't come that night and for many nights. But gradually, inperceptively, Easter returned to my heart, and when it did ALLELUIA had taken on a new meaning for me.

Did God work a miracle through St. Joseph for the likes of me? I don't know. It has never really been important to me that the experience be named. What I do know is that sometime in the mid 1960s, I was gifted with the realization that a loving, caring, selfless, beautiful lady, my mother, was safely home. That realization has kept me happy for twenty-eight years. That realization is my Alleluia.

John

G. H. SMITH

"John" is a good example of the Zen-man, who moves graciously through the pain of loss to acceptance. "He does not blame, he does not complain, he simply accepts."

Last week John was in a car accident. On green he drove his Toyota across an intersection in Manhattan, and a Mercedes 560 SEL hit him in the right rear side. Damage to his Toyota: $2,500; to the Mercedes: Negligible. Was he angry? Did he ask, "why me?" Did he blame the driver of the Mercedes? Did he curse his bad luck?

No. John didn't do any of those things! He certainly wasn't happy about the accident, but he said to me, "It could have been worse. I didn't get hurt. The other driver didn't get hurt." When I pointed out to him that it was perfectly alright to be angry at a man who caused an accident and that it was even alright to complain about the unfairness of it all, he just smiled.

I should have known better. John has been a friend for 20 years. He simply accepts that bad things will happen from time to time. "But," he claims "there is good in all bad happenings, in all situations. You just have to look for it."

Four years ago John had a heart attack. The next day I visited him in the Critical Care Unit by claiming to be family. The IVs and electrodes attached to him made me believe the worst. Be he still smiled. "Well, old buddy," he said quietly and a bit hoarsely, "They tell me the first 24 hours are the most dangerous ones. I'm past that mark. From here on its only going to get better." As usual, he simply refused to dwell on the negatives of a situation—although he does not sweep them under the rug—and as the song says, accentuated the positive. He does not blame, he does not complain, he simply accepts.

Even when someone wrongs him with apparent forethought and perhaps even maliciously, John can accept and forgive and will do so. A few years ago he owned a small bookstore in Greenwich Village together

G. H. Smith is a freelance writer living in New York City. He is interested in non-theistic spirituality and ethics.

with a friend. The friend skimmed the cash receipts whenever he could to support a marijuana habit; after a while they went broke. John lost most of his savings and, what was probably worse, he lost his credit among New York's publishers. He was finished in that business. I thought he should be angry and legally go after his friend. Instead he hugged him and forgave him. Even in adversity John can make life "a positive experience."

John possesses a Zen-like tranquility and fearlessness that convince him that things will work out in his best interest. He believes that if he strives hard enough, if he remains confident, and if he keeps reaching a little further than he reached before, he has a good chance of having things turn out the way he wants them to turn out. His experience in life has taught him that more often than not things will be well. In a crisis he therefore remains calm and serene.

A few weeks after his heart attack I commented on his apparent lack of worry about future heart problems. "I suppose," he said, "I can analyze this heart attack of mine for the next ten years . . . if I live that long. I can ask 'when did it start?' and 'how did it happen?' and most futilely 'why me?' But there is nothing I can do about the fact that I had a heart attack. All the analysis and all the worrying in the world is not going to change that. I have to be aware of the past. But my actions have to take place in the today. I have to lower my cholesterol, I have to get exercise, and I have to take my pills. That's all I can do in the present and that's all I will do in the present. The future will take care of itself. I will have to make some plans, of course. But that's all they will be: Merely plans."

Over the years John and I again and again have talked about his ability to live in the present and to use the past and the future to support it. I think I have come to understand and appreciate his viewpoint. He truly cannot change the past, but he needs to know it and, as far as possible, understand it. He often quotes whoever it was who said that those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it. But I have to take John's dictum very seriously: Don't over-analyze. Recognize that the past exists and then live and act today.

"You are Inclined to be Resentful"

MARY GRACE HAUBER

When I wrote to International Headquarters for Handwriting Analysis to inquire about their course, they surprised me by doing a mini-analysis of MY writing. As I read it, my head and my chest began to expand several sizes until I came to that devastating sentence: "You are inclined to be resentful at times"! . . . WHO? ME, RESENTFUL? NEVER! NOT I! (I, indignant? What an insult!)

Perhaps that was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I began to watch myself, and it didn't take long for me to realize that they were right! So I set out to study and to pray about it. I came up with a wealth of material which I shall try to share with you, briefly.

If we wish to become more God-like, we must cultivate a forgiving spirit; we must learn to forgive and forget. We all know how difficult it is to do that. If someone has wronged us, we feel deeply the injustice and may even plan to "get even" . . . sometime, somewhere, somehow. And as for forgetting, we may find ourselves deliberately recalling the incident and even the words that were spoken, and we get angry all over again. Conversations start with: do you know what he (she) did? . . . what he (she) said? The bitter memory is kept alive and well by constantly telling it to others. Why do we do it? We want sympathy, we want someone to agree with us. SELF-PITY, that abominable trap, keeps it going.

Another thing that came from my study and that from the viewpoint of mental and emotional health, forgiveness is good for us. If we allow hostilities and resentments and self-pity to build up through the years, they twist our personalities and make us hard, bitter persons. They gnaw at us, leaving us limp and less effectual for God's work. That host of horrible feelings caused by THWARTED AMBITION, RESENTMENT, FRUSTRATIONS, WOUNDS INFLICTED BY THOSE AROUND US, PAIN THAT COMES FROM FEELING UNAPPRECIATED, DISLIKED, REJECTED, and by UNFAIR CRITICISM . . . all these, justified or unjustified, leave wounds that fester and need to be healed. Unhealed, they enslave and sadden us and even effect

Mary Grace Hauber is a Benedictine Sister. She writes that she has been teaching grade school and high school students for over 60 years.

and aggravate our physical health, causing rheumatoid arthritis and a long list of other diseases.

But, you say, "What can I DO?" My first step was to admit it both to myself and to God. Then I turned it over to God, asking for healing, for I could not battle it myself. I began to pray about it . . . MUCH . . . MANY TIMES A DAY . . . to pray not just for myself, but for the person(s) who hurt me. I didn't pray for person X to change, but I prayed for her welfare, prayed in my own words and asked God to bless her.

All this was a big help and my Hurdy-Gurdy mind began to slow down. But then, I began to personalize the "Lord's Prayer," to say it in the first person singular and I found real help. Try saying it in that way many times a day and see what it does for you. Try it right now and be sure to put in the real name of the one who has hurt you:

My Father, you are in heaven (and here listening to me) Holy be your Name (don't let me . . . or anyone else abuse it) Your Kingdom come (let it spread all over the world) Your will be done (not mine, Lord, but yours, you who allowed me to be hurt) Let it be done here on earth just as it is being done in Heaven; Give me today my daily bread (for soul and body) and forgive me as I forgive person X, and lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil, especially the temptation to hate, to resent, to be angry with person X, for, in the same way and in the same measure as I forgive her, I know you will forgive me. Amen.

All that took place about twenty years ago. Do I still struggle with Resentments? Yes, at times, but not for long. If I notice resentment strokes occurring and reoccurring in my writing, I stop and say: "What are you upset about? Who hurt you?" and I start to apply the remedy I gave you. Peace comes fast!

Birding as a Window on Contemplative Prayer

MARY B. YOUNG

"Surprise, wonder, joy, thanksgiving, fulfillment; and the sense of entering into another order, and of being cleansed and healed." The author is not describing a prayer experience but is writing about her favorite hobby, birdwatching.

I have always been sure that the great teachers of contemplative prayer were talking about something real. Though separated by generations and out of differing religious traditions, they describe a surprisingly similar experience. They speak of being totally focussed, and at the same time, of being completely relaxed. They speak of emptying the mind, and they speak of paying attention. In my moments of frustration with "prayer without words" I have wanted to ask, "pay attention to *what*??"

For me, birding has been a way in to contemplative prayer. Brother David Steindl-Rast brought it together for me when he wrote in *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, of combining "concentration with wonderment," and asked, "What is it you tend to tackle with spontaneous mindfulness, so that without an effort your whole heart is in it?" My answer was immediate, "Birdwatching." I realized that I am never more alert or more relaxed than when I am in the woods. I have discovered that in order to really see what is moving in the woods I must stop moving myself. I must be still. I must be silent; and it is then that the life around me becomes visible. I put away all distractions. I am doing nothing else. I am paying attention, but my attention is expectation. I am open for whatever comes. Whatever comes will be an occasion for joy, and what comes is usually a surprise.

I was looking for warblers when I saw the Bald Eagle. I was sitting in a clearing; quiet, alert, expectant, relaxed—hoping to see some interesting warblers—when a shadow passed over head. I looked up to see a Bald Eagle gliding just over the tops of the trees. I jumped up, feeling that I ought to do something, but there was nothing to do except to rejoice and to be thankful. I walked home completely free from the anx-

Mary Young does her writing at the edge of New Hampshire woods and meadows.

ieties of daily life. I felt that I was in touch with a realm in which those anxieties had no power.

God is like that. Prayer is like that. Surprise, wonder, joy, thanksgiving, fulfillment; and the sense of entering into another order, and of being cleansed and healed. All this is true of prayer, and of the paying attention to birds that has shown me how to pray, and that is itself a kind of prayer.

The analogies are endless. In birding I have discovered the glory of the ordinary. Last Spring, after a fruitless time in insect-infested woods, I came home to find the first Bluebird of the season singing on the power lines right by my house.

Birding focusses attention away from yourself. Birders are often teased about the strange clothes we are apt to wear, but we aren't looking at ourselves or at our companions. The focus is on the birds, and they are adorned by God.

Birding teaches humility. You don't always know what you are seeing or hearing, no matter how skillful you become. You can spend a lifetime learning about the birds in one small meadow; and still there is more to see, more to know, more to delight, more for which to praise the Creator. Thanks be to God!

Angela's Parables

BARBARA ACKERMAN

Here is wisdom from a "ten-year-old with a red collie coat, fox-like snout, and deep-brown soulful eyes." Her advice is a safe harbor for anyone undergoing loss or stress or just the ups and downs of a normal day.

A year ago, a friend asked me to look after her dog for the weekend. It was then that I met and fell in love with Angela, a ten-year-old Jittery mixed breed with a red collie coat, fox-like snout, and deep-brown soulful eyes. Throughout all of our romps and rest stops since that time, Angela and I have revealed our very best selves to one another. I have been the good mother, and Angela has shared with me her joys and fears, her wisdom and strength, and her simple way of being.

I want to thank Angela's family for so generously and graciously sharing her. Angela continues to provide me with a safe harbor through a time of rough seas. With gratitude I share with you now Angela's messages, or parables. These are her sacred gifts.

1. Now is great.
2. Life goes better with someone to play with.
3. If you forget the past and don't worry about the future, but focus on the moment you're in, you may find bliss.
4. Forgive unceasingly.
5. Live and let live. Be and let be.
6. Take time to sniff.
7. There really isn't any special place that we're going to, like a destination. It's all in the walking. So lighten up and enjoy the trip and sniffs.
8. Anyplace is a fine place to be. Paradise can be a parking lot, a garbage pail, or a mound of dirt.
9. Life rolls along more smoothly when you let go of your resent-

A lover of books and dogs, Barbara Ackerman is a poet, singer, and songwriter in Princeton, NJ.

ments. Harboring resentments makes you miss things like the weather and squirrels.

10. Be easily pleased.
11. It is okay to be needy. It does not have to stop you from being in the world or making a contribution to it. By sharing your neediness with others, you actually serve them. You provide others with an opportunity to recognize their own needs and to exercise their compassion and generosity. Everyone involved gets "in shape" and gets healthier.
12. Sometimes it is fun to be a little selfish, and sometimes it isn't. At times, it is simply *more* fun when *everyone* is having fun. It is like more general bliss for *all*, or communal bliss. If *everyone* is having fun, there is more fun available for everyone.
13. If you are feeling guilty, it is always wise to check this feeling out. If you are in joy, then enjoy, for guilt is useless. Perhaps, though, you are doing something that's not so nice, or you are hurting someone's feelings or forgetting them, or you are being more selfish than you need to be. Guilt can be a sign to you that you are not acting out of your best self. Then you can simply fix it and then forgive yourself quickly and completely.
14. When you feel affection for another or do something nice for them, you don't really need to be thanked. This is because the good deed you have done for another is a deed done for yourself, and the warmth you have given out is the feeling you are left with there, in your own heart.
15. I believe that there is a God. Who else could make the sky look *that* good or this tree so shady? Who else could have come up with all these incredible views and sensational smells?
16. Dogs are guardian angels whose wings are under the fur.
17. If you want to find out what plan God has for you and what work he wants you to do in the world, you need to do two things. First, you need to be willing to stop trying to figure it out for yourself and admit that you don't have a clue, and then shut up. Be silent in your mind and heart, and stop believing that you're smart enough to figure it out. Give up trying to be intelligent on this issue. Secondly, you must be willing to accept the job God asks you to do, no matter what it is—even if it sounds disgusting or hard or terrifying. You

Paul M. Schrock

must accept the job with joy, even if you feel you'll have to wake up one morning and be a totally different person in order to do it.

Before God tells you anything, He has to know you've given up your "I Know Best" attitude, and that you're in a receptive frame of mind and heart to hear and receive His words. God must know that you are willing to "get with the program" and are not making up one of your own and calling it God's.

18. Being a dog, my life is pretty simple and satisfying. It is this way because I am incapable of doing anything else except doing what I was put here to do. I am here to be in bliss as much as possible, to love, need, forgive, and demand attention from humans, which keeps their hearts open and soft. Sort of like a healer, I guess.
19. Perhaps in the long run, your job in life may not be so very different from mine and *may* be what God would want you to do. Perhaps,

too, if you begin doing this as I do it in a very simple, direct way, you may get closer to God's plan for you than you first imagined.

20. You are often concerned about whether God is there personally looking out for you or whether he will answer your prayers.

    For years in your heart of hearts, you have been yearning for a dog. A dog in need of love, attention, reassurance, and affection—and HERE I AM! I may be borrowed or loaned, but remember you were never specific about that. But I do fit the bill perfectly, don't I? Am I not the answer to a prayer? Do you need more proof that knows and supplies all that we truly need? Don't you get it? There are no exceptions.

21. You, by the way, are the answer to *my* prayer. Do you see how it works? God is really neat about things like prayer. Yes, dogs pray too, and their prayers do get answered. You just have to really really want it in your heart of hearts and be sincere and happy with your prayer, and then be silent, still, patient, and wait with faith.

    God always answers our most ardent, needful prayers in the best possible way, sometimes beyond anything we might imagine for ourselves. Can you imagine the two of us being this much in love if we put our names in a computer dating service? God's perfection is amazing. If ever you lose sight of this, think about us.

22. Trust and affection may come as gifts, but are most often earned through patience and an open heart. This is called faith.

23. Life becomes happier and more meaningful the more you are more yourself.

24. To be fully alive means to be fully yourself, without apology. This is called grace.

APOLOGIES to Cam Maguire for errors in this quotation:

This is the day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day-star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind.

MANY MANSIONS: A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths
by Harvey Cox, Beacon Press, Boston, 1988, 216 pages, hard cover, $18.95.

In this newest collection of essays, Cox shares with us some of his personal encounters with people of other faiths: Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and Jews, as well as with other Christians. He listened, from the heart; learned much; and tells us how these experiences broadened and deepened his own conception of the Divine. Practicing Buddhist meditation, for example, brought him to a new realization of Christ's message for the world. Cox is guided by the hope that the world's religions will one day cease to divide humanity and that instead, individuals of every faith and denomination will come to the kind of understanding and friendship that binds people to each other at the same time that it binds them to God.

SHAMAN'S PATH: Healing, Personal Growth & Empowerment
Ed. Gary Doore, Shambhala, Boston, 1988, paperback, 236 pages, $10.95.

Shaman's Path represents a comprehensive collection of pertinent essays about shamanic healing and its relevance to health practices today. The eighteen authors have contributed much from their personal experience with this mode of healing which is reflected in the depth of the articles presented. Divided into sections on Shamans and Neo-Shamans, Shamanism and Healing, and Shamanism and Personal Empowerment, the book is well-worth reading both as an introduction to the subject and as a valuable compendium from practitioners in this field. A point frequently made is that those who fall off their spiritual paths may fall ill. Thus healers should treat the whole person, body, soul and spirit—not just the physical aspect of an illness.

Congratulations and thanks to *F.i.P.* for a *fine* piece on the Abbey of Gethsemani! I'm a frequent visitor there and personal friend of Father Matthew Kelty and Father Damien. You have done us "out in the world" a beautiful service—and have alleviated some of the guilt I myself feel as a journalist who has for years longed to give these Gethsemani Trappists the dignified and inspiring "EXPOSURE" they deserve and *we* so desperately need!

Please tell Sandy Huffaker he speaks for *me*—and for so very, very many. I, too, go there to get my head re-aligned.

The Travis DuPriest piece was equally delicious. You guys are so-o-o good, each issue! Thanks!

Linus Mundy; Santa Claus, IN

I came across your extraordinary publication last week: another instance of God's providence. Your introduction on "becoming free" was highly inspiring, and I have received a spiritual blessing from it. I am sending you a gift so that the magazine can be sent out to others in need of its beauty.

Jacqueline Johnston; San Francisco, CA

Enclosed is an autographed copy of my latest book of poetry, entitled *Songs of Praise*, which I am presenting to the library of F.i.P. with kindest good wishes. May all who read these poems behold the Universe praising God.

Georgiana Lieder Lahr; Pompano Beach, FLA

I am very grateful that your publication is available free of charge to inmates of penal institutions such as me. Otherwise I might have never come to enjoy the love of God which it contains. Being locked up and being unable to afford even the littlest things in life makes it hard. But having caring and understanding people like you there helps a man to grow in God's word. I thank and praise God for all of the people like you who reach out and show God's love for people like me. Praise God and thanks in the love of Christ from your brother behind bars.

Joe Dockham; Norfolk, VA

Your journal is serving to bring unity among the diverse approaches to spirituality. Thank you!

Cheryl Matteo; Gloucester, MA

I was born in China to a Zen Buddhist father and converted to Catholicism in the teens, but after 54 years I have just begun my spiritual journey with the Lord. I truly treasure your publication and want to share a meditation with your readers:

"To be mature in the process of living in faith.
To be a child in one's heart of faith.
Prayer is the link to this paradox."

Winnfred Hsu; Scottsdale, AZ

I picked up the October copy of your journal at a retreat and loved it for the breadth of the articles. There seems to be something for everyone in *F.i.P.*, and each article is inspiring in a different way. But also it's a prayerful experience. For example, Charles Cumming's article "How Do You Pray?" was extraordinary. Bless you for your noble work!

S. Silva; Philadelphia, PA

I received my first copy of *F.i.P.* quite as a surprise and also at a very difficult time in my life. I still do not know who ordered it for me, but would like to thank them very much. I thought one good way to thank them would be to share *F.i.P.* with yet another person. I include a check to renew my subscription and order one for someone else.

Pia Bertelli; Belmont, MA

I thank you for your service to humanity. Your publication brings Spirit into the commonplace experience of life like no other I am familiar with. Most others with which I have any acquaintance take a sectarian and therefore biased view of Communion with the Divine.

Raymond E. Shepard, Jr.; Lincoln, RI

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